

A refreshingly different approach

There are professions that are much maligned and being an estate agent is right down there with lawyers, tax inspectors and cowboy builders. Wouldn't it be refreshing to find an estate agent who put your needs before theirs; who considered their main objective was to make sure you are treated with honesty and respect and that even if you didn't buy or sell with them, you would be so impressed that you would recommend them and certainly use their services again in the future if required? Accents Southwest went to meet one such estate agent – Annelise Bosshard of AB Real Estate.

asw: How long have you worked in estate agency?

AB: I started working 12 years ago as an estate agent for a traditional big agency covering Hérault and then 9 years ago I set up my own company as I wanted to work ethically and being my own boss was the only way I could accomplish that. I believe in being open and honest with clients and I would rather point out the downsides to a property than gloss over them. Buying a house is a huge investment and most of the time my clients are buying into 'the dream' as well, and I do my utmost to ensure they are not disappointed..



asw: Do you consider yourself to be different from other agencies?

AB: I like to think so – I certainly hope so! I pride myself on our professional approach to everything and I instil the same ethos into everyone who works in the team with me. We spend a lot of time with clients in the beginning to find out exactly what they are looking for so that we don't waste their time showing them inappropriate properties. If we don't have anything suitable, we will go and search for properties on behalf of the client. I have had clients in the past asking me to visit properties for them before they fly over as they trust my judgement. I have had other clients who have insisted on only working with me even though the properties we were visiting were with other estate agents. I think that speaks for itself.

asw: Do you have mostly English speaking clients?

AB: A large number of our sellers are French, and our buyers come from all over the world. Of course the most frequently used language is English, however, we cover most European languages fluently between everyone in the team at AB Real Estate.

asw: What geographical area do you cover?

AB: We cover four departments (counties) of the Languedoc-Roussillon region; the Gard, Hérault, Aude and Pyrénées-Orientales; or in other words, from the Rhone valley to the Spanish border.

asw: Why should people buy in the region?

AB: It's simply such a wonderful place – there is something for everyone here, whatever your age. It is one of France's most popular tourist destinations and the sunniest region in France with over 300 days of sunshine per year. The pace of life is slower and some of the 'old values' continue, giving a more authentic 'south of France' feel. For the fifth year running, France was voted as the best place to live in the world – Australia came second this year. You can't put a price on quality of life.

asw: Once the sale is made, is that where your role finishes?

AB: Absolutely not. This is the start of a relationship! We continue to support our clients by helping them to set up bank accounts, insurance and to get services connected or transferred into their name. It is complicated enough doing these things in your own country, but trying to do it in a foreign language can be very daunting. We keep in touch with all our clients via our newsletter and we often have clients who have bought with us or not, come back a few years later to sell and vice versa. Sometimes it is not straightforward to get the sale completed, so I will have meetings with Notaires, Mairie officials and whoever I need to see in order to get everything sorted out in the best possible way for the client. France is famous for its bureaucracy and red tape and our job is to make it as easy as possible for our clients and take the fear and headache out of it all.

asw: And finally, how do you see the property market going in the foreseeable future?

AB: The indications are that France is out of the recession, not that it was really affected to the extent of other countries due to its very stringent rules about lending money. The housing market has suffered an overall fall of about 10% and I think we can safely say that it has bottomed out here. We have been unusually busy of late, which is great, and these are clients wanting to clinch a deal now while it is still a buyer's market. The region is a safer investment than other foreign property markets or the stock market; bricks and mortar are traditionally a better investment over the long term. The Côtes d'Azur and Provence are expensive but the Languedoc-Roussillon remains competitively priced – for now.



AB Real Estate

If you want to find out more, visit
www.ab-real-estate.com
 or call Annelise on 04 67 36 36 80 or
 email her on ab@ab-real-estate.com